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MARC AZÉMA. *L'art des cavernes en action. Tome 1: les animaux modèles. Aspect, locomotion, comportement.* 223 pages, 187 illustrations. 2010. Paris: Errance; 978-2-87772-399-2 paperback €32.

MARC AZÉMA. *L'art des cavernes en action. Tome 2: les animaux figurés. Animation et mouvement, l'illusion de la vie*. 471 pages, over 495 b&w & colour illustrations. 2010. Paris: Errance; 978-2-87772-413-5 paperback €39.

The two volumes reviewed here make Azéma's research, started some twenty years ago and concluded with the award of a doctorate in 2003, available to a wide readership. The essence of this research, already exposed in a number of articles, is that prehistoric artists put together a conventional notation capable of rendering animal movement and deconstructing this movement in successive images.

Volume 1 starts by summarising what we know of the attitudes and behaviour of the principal animal species depicted in French cave art: horse, aurochs, bison, ibex, deer, reindeer, mammoth, rhinoceros, bear and lion. For each of these species there is a brief overview of their paleontological origin and position in animal classification and a short section on their anatomy and the terminology used; this is followed by a consideration of the two most important aspects of these animals, their biology and ethology. Particular attention is paid to locomotion and pace (walking, trotting, ambling, galloping, jumping, stopping resting...), to diet, to visible aspects of communication between animals, to interactions both within species — agonistic or not — and between species, as well as to reproductive and predatory behaviour. This choice prepares the ground for the systematic use of the data relating to these subjects in Volume 2: there a whole chapter is devoted to the same series of species, this time attempting to recognise the elements identified in the first volume in the representations of animals in French caves. This approach is applied systematically to 126 caves with parietal art (out of 169 known in France) containing 3671 images of animals whose zoological identification is secure. This survey shows that a slightly greater proportion of animals (59 per cent) is represented at rest; among the remainder the percentage of figures in movement is lower for herbivores than for carnivores. It is the species that present the most danger to humans (lions, bears, rhinoceros) that are most frequently shown moving, especially lions (65.6 per cent). The study also allows us to reach a finer interpretation of certain signs whose meaning is in dispute, such as 'lines', 'angular signs', 'circles' or 'barbed wire' markings which feature on various animals. Behavioural analysis shows that the posture of the animals marked by such signs generally evokes animals that have been injured, or are collapsing or lying down, thus reinforcing the idea that these signs represent weapons or injuries, depending on each case. Scenes of hunting or with hunting connotations are however quite rare, especially for dangerous animals, and the animals most often bearing 'arrow-shots' are herbivores. Sexual identification indicates that males are more frequently represented among bisons (67 per cent), which goes against Leroi-Gourhan's thesis that the bison is a female symbol; it is indeed quite hard to accept that prehistoric people would have chosen males to represent a female symbol, and Azéma's statistics suggest we abandon the structuralist interpretation of animals as sexual symbols. Moreover, the data indicate that there are no mating scenes, contrary to what has sometimes been claimed, and that mating behaviour is only shown in rare scenes of courtship, depicted for unknown reasons.

Even though it cannot — nor pretends to — answer the questions relating to 'why?', the approach followed by Azéma is successful in that it allows us to gain a clearer view of the bestiary of cave art, at least in France. The author does not put forward a new

* *Centre d'études des mondes africains (CEMAf, UMR 8171) & School of Geography, Archaeology and Environmental Studies, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa (Email: JLLQ@rupestre.on-rev.com) (Translated by Reviews Editor)*

interpretation of parietal art in general but proposes *in fin*e a hypothesis which envisages an 'embryonic visual grammar' — whose existence is nevertheless open to doubt; above all Azéma's study defines the contours and the constants of an exceptionally rich visual world, an achievement in itself.

The last chapter of volume 2 is devoted to the part of Azéma's research that has attracted most media attention: the representation of animal movement through its deconstruction. This theory rests on the observation of multiple heads or limbs on some representations: this can be the result of repeated painting or retouching or correspond to a wish to express movement, Azéma's preferred hypothesis. He agrees with Michel Lorblanchet that this idea needs to be tested with a detailed analysis of overlays and pigments and regrets that this is not available in the book. So he has to be content with 'listing and describing the figures' that illustrate his point, without providing real proof. These figures, present on a dozen sites, number 52 instances or 3.5% of all animal images showing movement and barely more than 1% of all the zoomorphic figures known from French caves. Furthermore, it is impossible to know whether the artists meant to represent, either in friezes like the stag frieze at Lascaux or in a 'graphic blur', several moving animals or a single one in successive postures. The possibility that showing movement was intended had been suggested as early as in the 1950s by G. Prudhommeau who shot a short film based on the Lascaux images (Prudhommeau 1984). The idea was taken up in the 1990s by E. Wachtel who noted, quite independently, that '*In a number of caves, there are creatures engraved or painted with "extra" body parts. For example, in Pair-non-Pair there is an animal — probably an ibex-with two heads* [. . .]. *Under appropriate conditions, we will not see multiple still images, but instead, a moving and changing image. The ibex will lift and drop its head*' (Wachtel 1993: 138).

As can be seen, the hypothesis that animation in prehistoric images was achieved by deconstructing animal movement is an idea that has been around for some time. The most convincing example is a piece of portable art, a bovine rib from the Grotte de la Vache (Ariège) which has three engraved felines, shown running in successive phases typical of their gait. The fact that Azéma has returned so often to this example in twenty years of publication (Azéma 1991, 1992a, 1992b, 2005, 2006, 2008 & 2010), without producing further equally impressive examples, shows that this piece is exceptional. In sum, the hypothesis is attractive, but remains unproven: it has been *illustrated* by its champions, but an actual demonstration is a different affair.

In the end, it is the lesser known aspects of Azéma's work that make this publication so valuable. Volume 1 in particular is a veritable manual of ethology applied to art and should be read by all those interested in cave art but also by anyone curious about animal behaviour and posture, in a book that makes the subject accessible outside the specialist literature; students of fine art, for example, would find nourishment in its pages. As for volume 2, it is an extremely useful bestiary of French parietal art containing statistical analyses which we hope will be extended to the prehistoric art of Eurasia as a whole.

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